



Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Living Out God's Grace & Unconditional Love

October 3, 2024

Dear members of the ELCIC,

One year ago, on October 7, we watched with horror as a new wave of violence engulfed the Holy Land. After 56 years of military occupation and 16 years of complete blockade in Gaza, tensions once again erupted as Hamas launched an attack on areas of Israel surrounding the besieged Gaza strip. We as Christians are heartbroken to see the devastation that the last 76 years of systemic violence and oppression has led to. As feared by many at the time, the events of that day led to more violence across all of Palestine and Israel. It is with heavy hearts that we acknowledge this day as the anniversary of the current war between Israel and Hamas.

In the last year, the death toll in Gaza has risen to the tens of thousands and hundreds have been killed in the West Bank as well. We grieve deeply with Palestinians and Israelis who have lost loved ones and whose lives have been horrifically impacted by this violence. We mourn the thousands of innocent civilians killed in indiscriminate attacks, including on hospitals, schools, places of worship, and tent encampments. We continue to feel deep concern as well for all the people in the affected region who are facing displacement, hunger, injury, illness, and trauma as a result of war, especially as tensions escalate.

We pray for our siblings in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), a church whose Bishop Ibrahim Sani Azar, pastors and people we have come to know and care for.

Bishop Ibrahim Azar shares the following with our church: "As Christians ministering in the land of Jesus, we are facing unimaginable challenges. We condemn every act of violence that costs human life, no matter the perpetrators, and are heartbroken by the loss we witness every day. As we mourn our siblings in Gaza, as we face increasing acts of violence from Israeli soldiers and settlers in our communities, as we struggle under a crippling economic situation across Jerusalem and the West Bank, we look to our Christian siblings around the world for your solidarity and prayers that we might reach a just peace that ensures freedom, safety, and dignity for everyone in the Holy Land."

We join the ELCJHL in praying for freedom, safety, and dignity for everyone in the Holy Land. We admire the ongoing witness and ministry of our partner. We are grateful for the generosity of ELCIC members in supporting our recent ELCJHL Appeal. We surpassed our goal of \$263,000 to provide one month of teachers' salaries and 50% of the pastors' salaries.

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The ELCIC acknowledges that its buildings and ministries, from coast to coast to coast, are on traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples.

We commend to you the August 26, 2024, [Statement of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem Regarding the Ongoing War](#). The ELCIC continues to support a two-state framework for peace and we express our disappointment that [Canada abstained from the September 18, 2024 United Nations motion](#) calling on Israel to end its “unlawful presence” in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank.

We are concerned about the rise in antisemitic and anti-Islamic words and actions in our communities and across the world. We pray that all people of faith may embody peace rather than incite hate.

We continue to hope, pray and advocate for:

- An Enduring and Sustained Ceasefire.
- Immediate flow of life saving food, water, aid, fuel and humanitarian assistance.
- Release of all captives.
- End all arms transfers to Israel.
- End of occupation so a just-peace can begin.

We invite you to write to the Prime Minister of Canada, and to your Member of Parliament, to lift up these advocacy concerns.

Please join us in prayer and concern for the region. For those who mourn their dead on both sides of the conflict. For the hostages and their families, afraid for their lives. For those who have been maimed and injured. For those who have lost their homes. For those who have not been able to move to safety. For the opening of a humanitarian corridor into Gaza. For a peaceful solution to this war. That the war may not escalate into neighbouring countries.

*God of peace, we pray for peace in Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon. We pray for all leaders that hearts would be changed and there would be a peaceful ending to this war. God of comfort and strength, we pray for all those who are suffering in this war – those who mourn, the injured, those who live in fear. We pray for those who continue to try to provide aid and medical care – workers who risk their lives. Bring us all hope, bring us all strength, bring us all peace.
In your holy and life-giving name, we pray, Amen.*

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Susan Johnson
National Bishop, ELCIC

Rev. Dr. Ali Tote
Saskatchewan Synod

Rev. Kathy Martin
British Columbia Synod

Rev. Jason Zinko
Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod

Rev. Patricia Schmermund
Synod of Alberta and the Territories

Rev. Carla Blakley
Eastern Synod